

Categorical Exclusion Determination and Decision Record for Conifer Limb Pruning in the Butte Falls Resource Area. OR115-08-37

Description of Proposed Action

The Butte Falls Resource Area proposes to prune the limbs of conifers using hand tools such as hand pruning saws, loppers, or hand shears. Pruning would be to a 9' height, or ½ the height of the tree if the tree is less than 18' in height, removing all limbs to that height. The proposed activities would occur within the Butte Falls Resource Area of the Medford District BLM (Bureau of Land Management) in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 on lands allocated as Matrix lands, as defined on page 107 in the Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, June 1995.

The objective of the proposed treatment is to improve wood quality on selected conifers, reduce continuity of ladder fuels on pruned conifers, and reduce susceptibility to blister rust on pruned sugar pine.

All treatments would occur in the Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District BLM, Jackson County. See attached maps for exact locations of project units and specific treatments.

Plan Conformance Review

The Bureau of Land Management did not scope this proposal and the public was not involved in its development. This proposal is consistent with policy directed by the following:

- *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (Northwest Forest Plan FSEIS, 1994 and ROD, 1994);
- *Final-Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision* (EIS, 1994 and RMP/ROD, 1995);
- *Record of Decision To Remove the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines from the Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (USDI 2007); and
- Medford District Integrated Weed Management Plan Environmental Assessment (1998) and tiered to the Final-Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS, 1985).

The proposed action is in conformance with the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District by the Oregon and California Lands Act of 1937, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, Endangered Species Act of 1973, Clean Water Act of 1987, Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 (as amended 1986 and 1996), Clean Air Act of 1990 (as amended), and Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979.

This proposal is consistent with management direction in the Medford District Resource Management Plan (p. 38) that directs the BLM to "Produce a sustainable supply of timber and

other forest commodities to provide jobs and contribute to the community stability” and silvicultural practices including pruning as described on page 185 (USDI 1995).

Project Design Features

1. Prune (remove) all of the branches on selected conifers to a 9' height, or ½ the height of the tree if the tree is less than 18' in height.
2. Treat approximately 200 acres and within these treatment units, prune approximately 70 conifers per acre on an average 25' by 25' spacing. Priority for treatment would be the dominant conifer trees and species preference for treatment would be sugar pine, Douglas-fir, and ponderosa pine in that order. Good tree condition and dominance in stand would be the preferred trees for pruning over even spacing with overall pruning of 70 trees per acre.
3. Prune trees between 4" and 12" in diameter at breast height.
4. Prune limbs so that limb stubs after pruning are no more than 0.25 inches from the bole of the tree.
5. Use hand tools such as pruning saws, shears, or loppers. Power equipment such as chain saws will not be allowed.
6. Leave severed conifer limbs on the ground, not leaning against the tree, or pile with slash if the unit pruned had also been precommercially thinned and piled at the same time.
7. Allow no ground disturbing activities associated with the pruning on any of the units treated.
8. Seasonally restrict pruning within 200 feet of northern spotted owl (NSO) nest sites or NSO activity centers from March 1 through June 30 of a given year. This may be extended up to September 30 if nesting activity is occurring at that time.
9. Pick up all trash and garbage and dispose of properly.
10. No overnight camping would be allowed at the site or in the surrounding area.
11. Vehicles must stay on existing roads and trails.

Categorical Exclusion Determination

This proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion as provided in United States Department of Interior, Departmental Manual, 516 DM 11.9, D(10) which allows for “Vegetation management activities, such as seeding, planting, invasive plant removal, installation of erosion control devices (e.g., mats/straw/chips), and mechanical treatments, such as crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, mowing, and prescribed fire when the activity is necessary for the management of vegetation on public lands.

Before any action described in the list of categorical exclusions may be used, the “extraordinary circumstances,” included in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, must be reviewed for applicability. After review, the BLM determined no extraordinary circumstances exist that would cause the proposed action to have a significant environmental effect. The action will not require additional analysis.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this project, contact Doug Stewart, Project Leader, at (541) 618-2264.

Decision

It is my decision to implement conifer pruning, as described in the Proposed Action and as shown on the attached project maps, in fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

Decision Rationale

The proposed action has been reviewed by Butte Falls Resource Area staff and appropriate Project Design Features, as specified above, will be incorporated into the proposal. Based on the attached NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) Categorical Exclusion Review, I have determined the proposed action involves no significant impact to the human environment and no further environmental analysis is required.



7/30/08

Christopher J. McAlear
Field Manager
Butte Falls Resource Area

Date

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

Notice of the forest management decision to be made on the action described in this categorical exclusion will be posted on the Medford District internet website. The action is subject to protest under 43 CFR 4.450-2. A decision in response to a protest is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals under 43 CFR part 4.

NEPA Categorical Exclusion Review**Proposed Action:**

This action would prune the limbs of conifers, using hand tools such as hand pruning saws, loppers, or hand shears. Pruning would be to a 9' height or ½ the height of the tree, if the tree is less than 18' in height, removing all limbs to that height.

Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3.A(3) provides for a review of the following criteria for categorical exclusion to determine if exceptions apply to the proposed action based on actions which may:

1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Initial JE Remarks:

2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resource; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Initial JE Remarks:

3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].

☐ Yes ☒ No

Initial JE Remarks:

4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Initial JE Remarks:

5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Initial JE Remarks:

6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Initial JE Remarks:

7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Initial JE Remarks:

8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

Plants ☐ Yes ☒ No Initial mw Remarks: no ground disturbance

Animals ☐ Yes ☒ No Initial DR Remarks:

Fish ☐ Yes ☒ No Initial SL Remarks:

9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Initial JW Remarks:

10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

☐ Yes ☒ No
Initial JW Remarks:

11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

☐ Yes ☒ No
Initial Jcm Remarks:

12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or nonnative invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

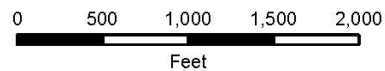
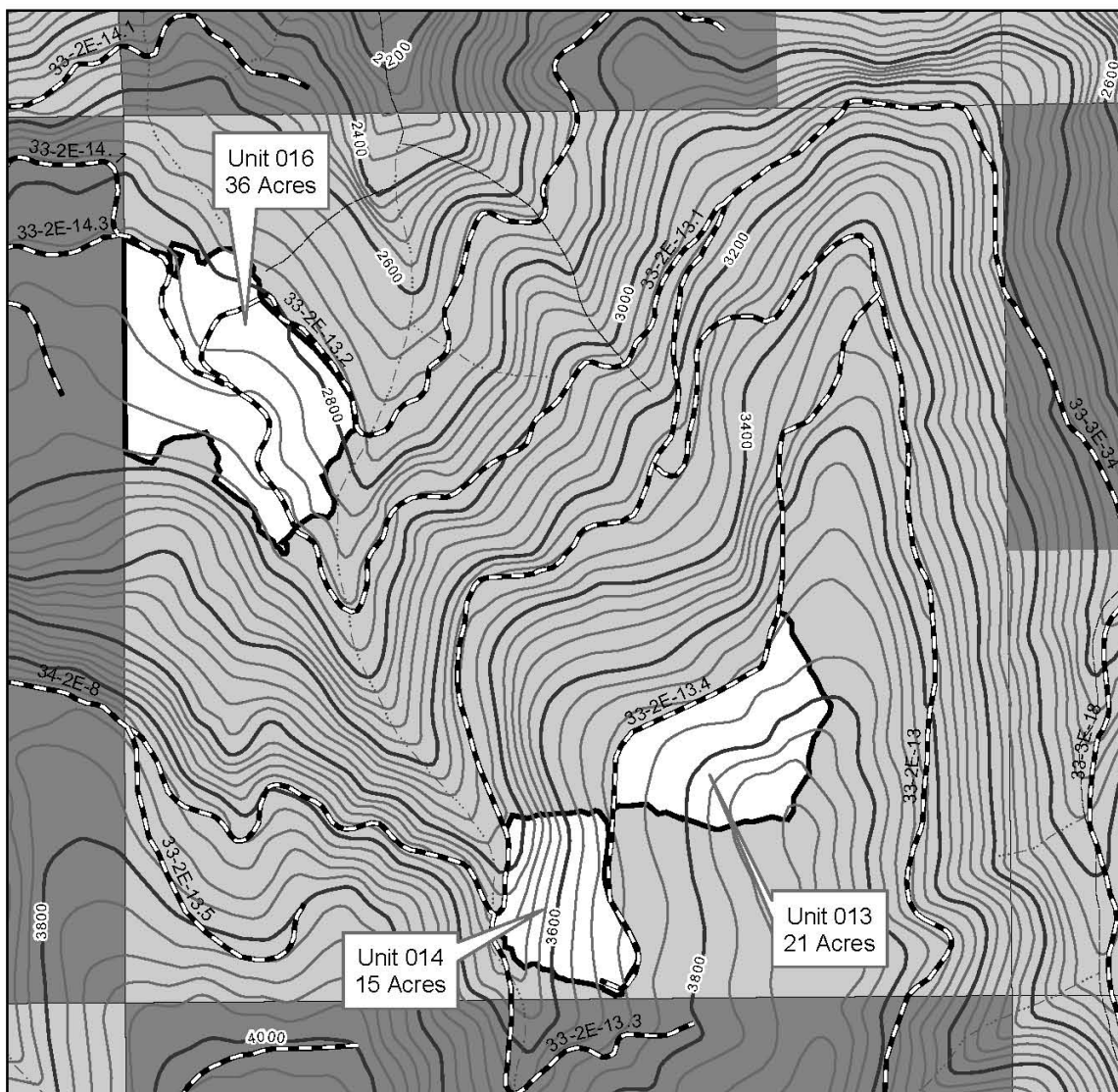
☐ Yes ☒ No
Initial mw Remarks:

Categorical Exclusion Reviewers:

Name	Title	Date	Initials
J. Williams	NEPA Coordinator	7/22/08	JW
M. Wineteer	Botanist	6/26/08	mw
D. Roelofs	Wildlife Biologist	6/30/08	DR
S. Liebhardt	Fisheries Biologist	7/8/08	SL
S Simpson	Hydrologist	7/22/08	SS
K. Van Etten	Soil Scientist	6/26/08	KBE
L. Mruzik	Fire/Fuels Specialist	7/9/08	LM
J. McNeel	Cultural Technician	6/26/08	Jcm
R. Bryan	Engineer	6/26/08	R. Bryan
T. Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Planner	6/27/08	TL

Forked Tongue

T33S R2E Sec 13



1:12,000



FOI Key #	Unit #	Acres	Item	Treatment
164303	013	21	1-A	Conifer Limb Pruning - 9'
164304	014	15	1-A	Conifer Limb Pruning - 9'
164306	016	36	1-A	Conifer Limb Pruning - 9'

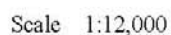
Total Acres: 72

Map Page:



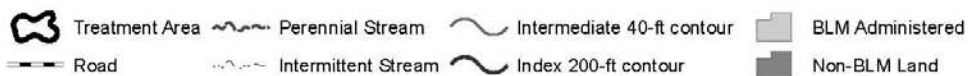
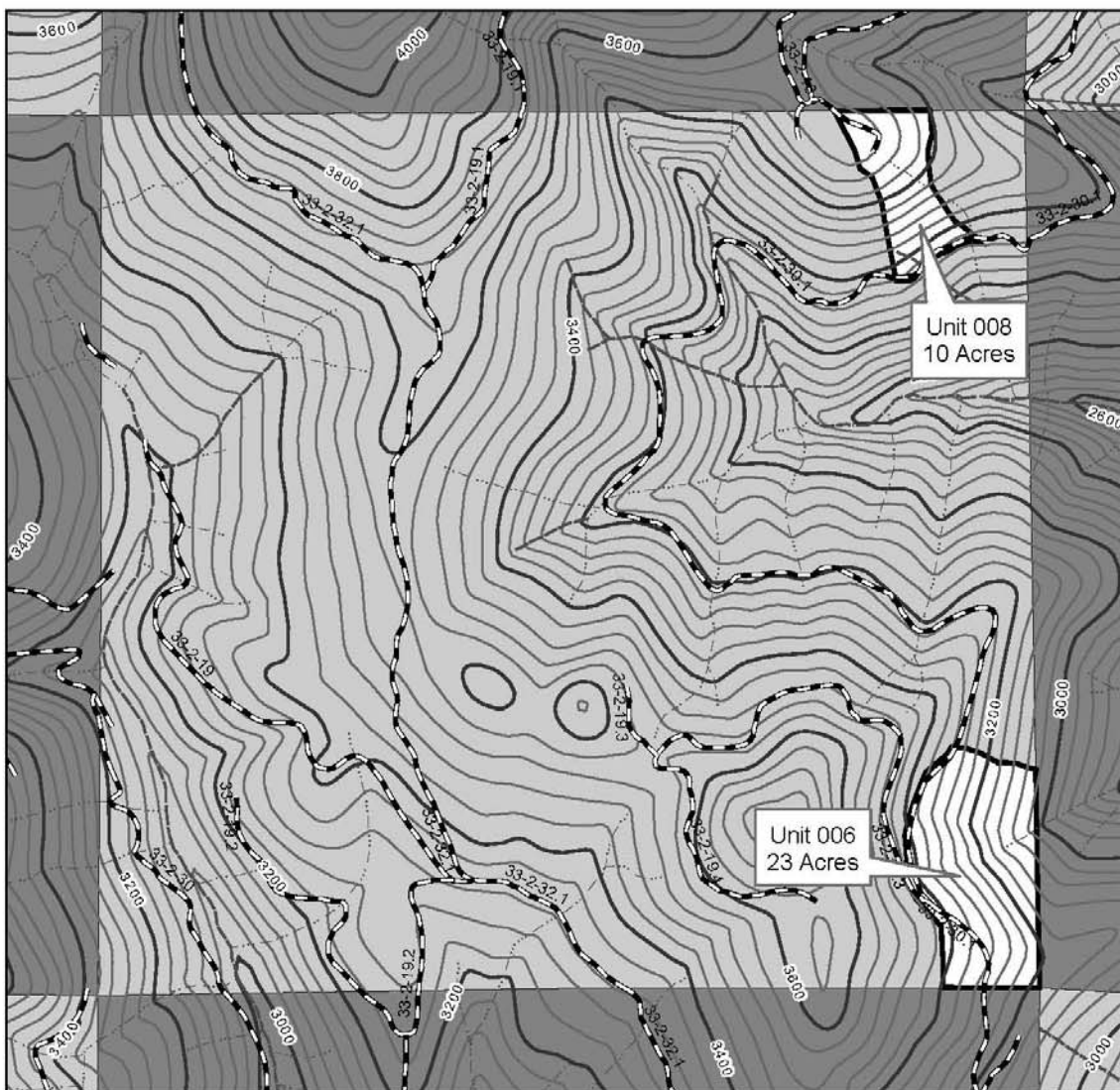
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Butte Falls RA
July 2008





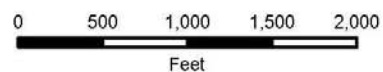
South Round Top

T33S R2W Sec. 19



FOI Key #	Unit #	Acres	Item	Treatment
162159	006	23	1-A	Conifer Limb Pruning - 9'
162119	008	10	1-A	Conifer Limb Pruning - 9'

Total Acres: 33



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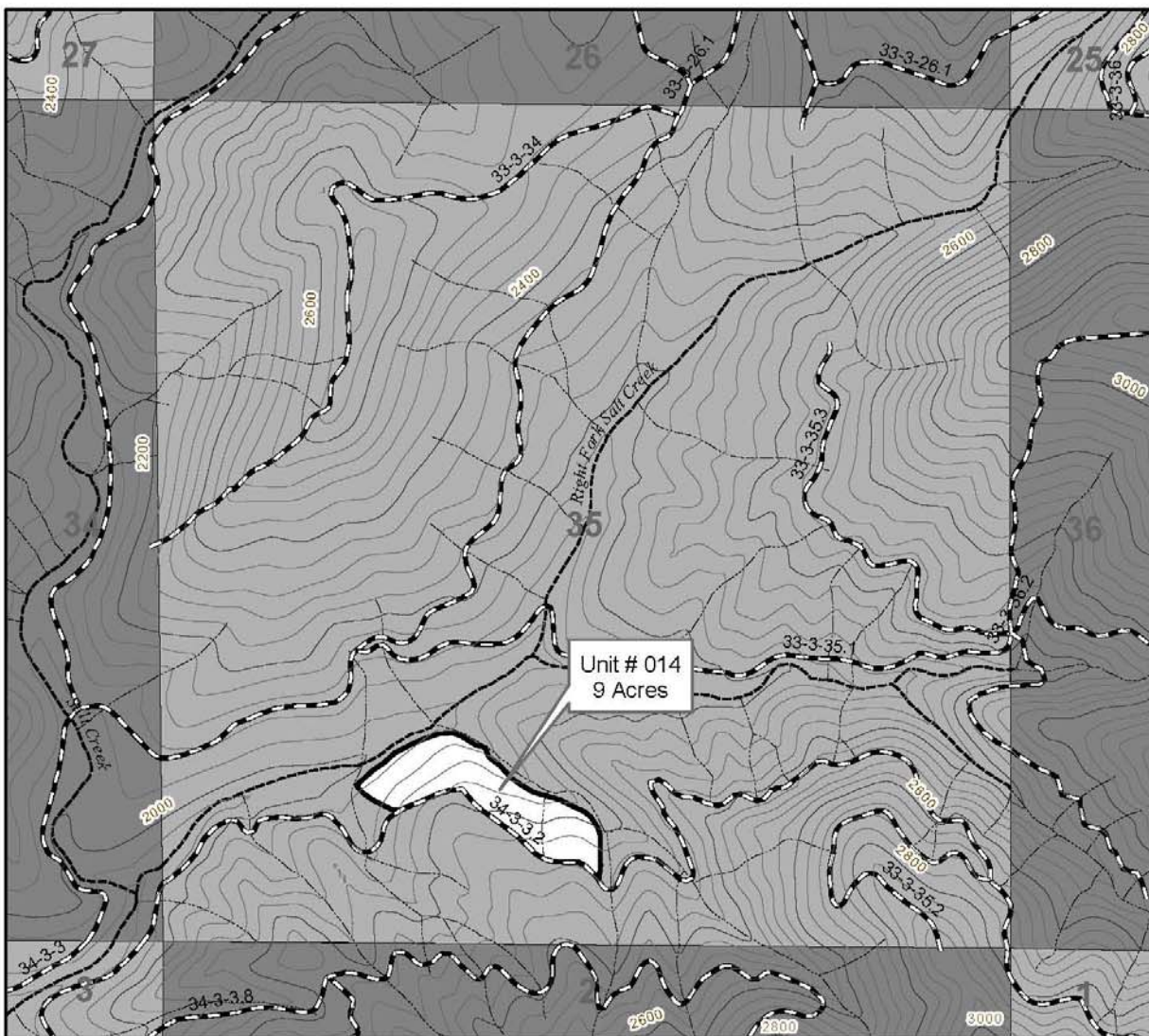
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Map Page:

South Salt

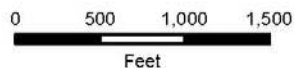
T33S - R3W - Sec. 35



- OI Unit
 Perennial Stream
 BLM-Administered Land
 Intermediate 40-ft contour
 Road
 Intermittent Stream
 Non-BLM Land
 Index 200-ft contour

FOI Key #	Unit #	Acres	Item	Treatment Type
158520	014	9	1-A	Conifer limb Pruning - 9'

Total Acres: 9



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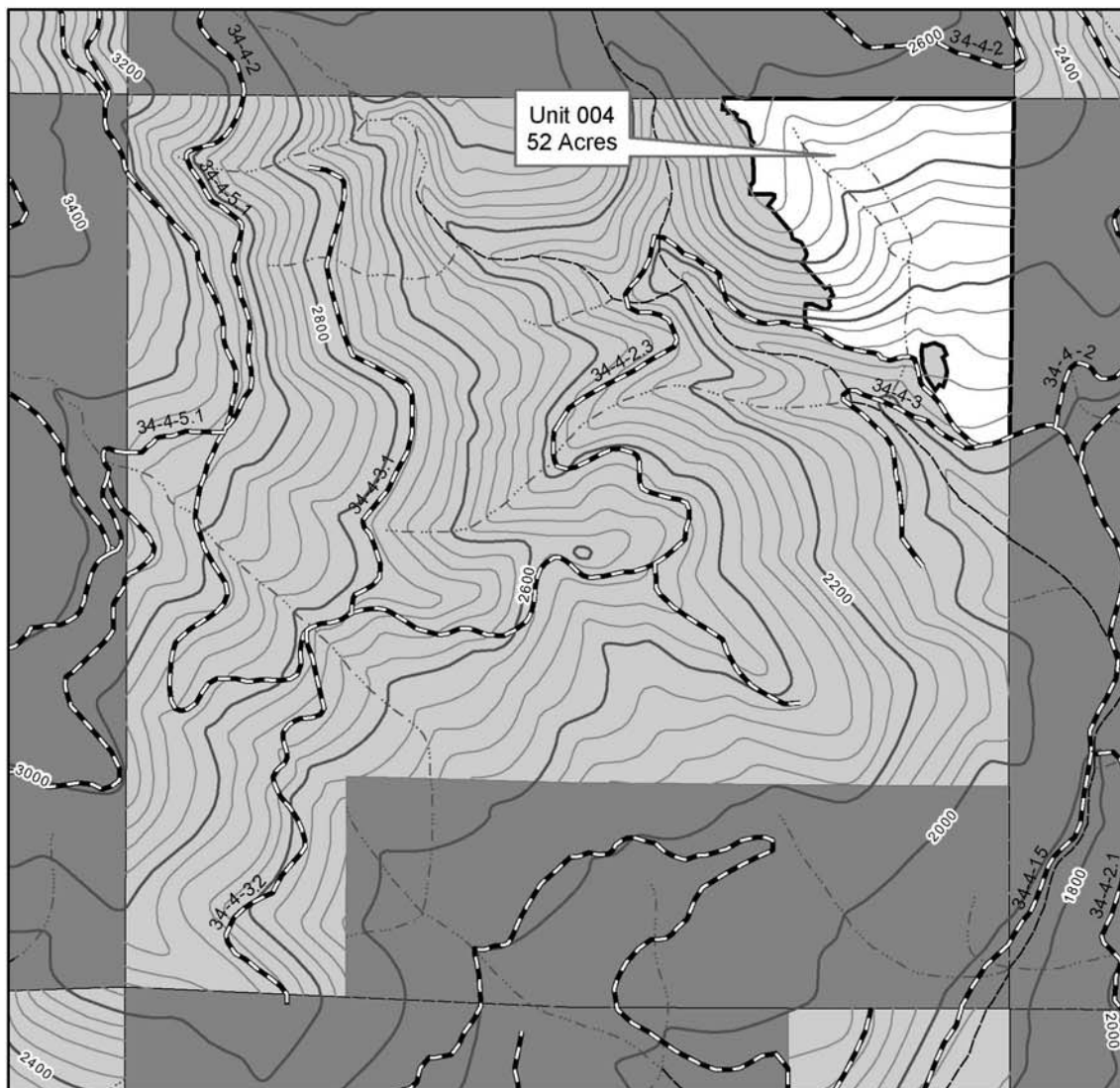


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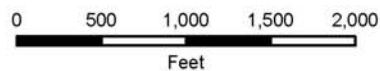
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Pleasantly Hot

T34S R4W Sec 3



- Treatment Area
 Perennial Stream
 Intermediate 40-ft contour
 BLM Administered
 Road
 Intermittent Stream
 Index 200-ft contour
 Non-BLM Land



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FOI Key #	Unit #	Acres	Item	Treatment
155592	004	52	1-A	Conifer Limb Pruning - 9'

Total Acres: 52

Map Page:



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August 2007

